

UC Riverside

UCR Honors Capstones 2019-2020

Title

eSports - A Rising Industry

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Publication Date

2019

By

A capstone project submitted for
Graduation with University Honors

University Honors
University of California, Riverside

APPROVED

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Abstract

I've been thinking about the capstone since my second year at UCR. Like many within the STEM discipline, I initially thought about doing a research project as that would have been most convenient, though I believed that this path would not add anything new to my learning experience. That same year I got more involved with Highlander Gaming, the Inland Empire's premiere gaming organization, and enhanced my passion and understanding of the esports industry and community. This led me into thinking about a creative project that talks about the above topics in more depth so that people could understand. eSports is the shorthand term for electronic sports, which refers to competitive video gaming and the community and industry surrounding it. Unlike traditional sports, eSports is not as recognized by the western population (North America and Europe) as much as the rest of the world. There are multiple reasons for this, including eSports gamers not generally being labeled as athletes, the rich culture behind traditional sports in the west, and so much more. That said, the eSports industry has seen exponential growth as a soon-to-be billion-dollar industry and is increasingly catching the eye of mainstream media. Soon enough, we will be seeing eSports increasingly in our daily lives. With my capstone, I hope to reach out to students who have an interest in the esports industry, but never truly discovered it further for themselves.

This led me into thinking about a creative project that talks about the above topics in more depth so that people could understand how this once niche subculture is slowly becoming the next big thing. I figured that this could serve as a good reason for me to pursue a project that could potentially highlight the reality of the esports world and allow students to see that it is so much more than a mindless pastime. Thankfully, UCR offers students opportunities to teach R'courses, which are one-unit student led courses where we cover topics that are traditionally not

covered but any curriculum at the university. eSports fits into this category as there is no existing course or program that remotely relates to the subject.

Before I could obtain approval for this course, I needed to follow a series of lengthy steps. Apart from discovering that no such course already exists at UC Riverside, I then had to develop the rough syllabus as to what I intend to teach in the course while looking for a faculty mentor who is willing to assist me through the creation of this course, however, the professor must be from the department that is most relevant to my class, which in my case, is media and cultural studies. After these two steps, I sent all the necessary information to the chair of the department, at which point the course was approved. The following quarter, I took EDUC 102, a course that taught several of us prospective R'course facilitators about democratic pedagogy. This class was designed for us to learn creative ways to instruct the class as opposed to heavily relying on lectures as is commonly done in school curriculums worldwide. Finally, after approximately two quarters of preparation, I am now permitted to teach the course in the Teaching and Learning Center in Rivera Library. The class was taught in a 50/50 manner, where half of the classes required active participation, and the other half a more traditional lecture format. In the latter format, I provide students with a large overview of information, while in the former I have them explore more deeply into specific topics on their own. Given that this is a one-unit course, I did not include any homework as part of the syllabus, rather any work that I would have given students is done in class to promote teamwork and active participation.

There were a few roadblocks I encountered while creating the course. Had it not been for the University Honors faculty engagement hours, I probably would not have gotten in contact with my current faculty mentor. I have sent several emails to professors in the past, and most would kindly refuse, but I remember one professor in particular told me that he was an opponent

of R'courses for the sole reason that only the university should be responsible for changes to curriculum when necessary rather than having students take initiative and teaching their own courses. Furthermore, about a couple weeks before the approval deadline, I sent my rough syllabus to the department of education, only to receive it back with a number of criticisms, the most prominent one being that they believed I did not have enough content to teach for 10 day's worth of classes. This was not too big an issue since I had plenty of information that I intended on teaching, but I was not explicit enough in my rough syllabus.

At the end of the course I anticipated that students obtain a greater understanding of the complexities and intricacies of the eSports industry and community, analyze the trends in this continuously evolving field, and connect the relevance of eSports to popular media. My first class begins with a lengthy Kahoot that assesses what students know about eSports. Apart from testing their general knowledge, students play in teams of three to five, so they get an opportunity to interact with each other. The second class continues this trend of active learning, as I have students get into similarly sized groups and work on a presentation that will be presented during the third week of class. In this exercise, students are asked to budget a major gaming tournament using their knowledge of traditional sports. I am not concerned about quantitative metrics, rather I want to see if students know where sports and eSports industries get a bulk of their money from. Furthermore, this exercise drives home a major takeaway from this class, which is the fact that eSports isn't any different from regular sports. Their presentations on the third week take approximately half the class time, while I spend the remaining half explaining their findings to see if what they presented on lines up with how eSports industries function on an economic level.

During the next set of classes, I explain how people get involved in professional eSports and what the typical eSports career looks like, while comparing it to regular sports for students to better understand the similarities and differences. We then speak about issues that arise within gaming and eSports, topics such as socioeconomic, gender, racial disparities within different communities and parts of industry such as video game design. The latter is notorious for being an unwelcoming environment to women as well as being an industry whose higher-level management does not value the work life balance of their employees, and in recent years has led to unionization. Furthermore, we delve more into the macro level details regarding the differences in eSports in the West versus the rest of the world, and why this industry is not nearly as respected in America as it is elsewhere. These topics are mentioned to highlight that there is far more to eSports than just gaming, rather there is an entire lifestyle and culture surrounding it that varies greatly depending on your background and where you live.

I then present students with another opportunity to discover a topic on their own. This time, students will present on a video gaming community of their choice. This presentation is aimed to demonstrate to students that eSports attracts a diverse crowd, and no matter who you are, there is bound to be something that interests you. One example is the difference between the hardcore fighting game community that revolves its entire scene around local area network tournaments, compared to the more layback and artistic cosplay community, who enjoy dressing up and acting as their favorite video game and television characters. As an important side note, the characters from television often come from anime, a Japanese animation style that has exploded in popularity worldwide. Similar to weeks two and three, students will spend one class period working on the assignment and then presenting it in the following class. I usually chime

in my knowledge after each individual presentation incase groups did not touch upon a certain subtopic that is either important or may be of interest to the class.

We then wrap up the class with a discussion about whether eSports can rightfully hold its place alongside traditional sports that have remained in the global spotlight for centuries. I also take this time to explain how students can proceed to learn and understand more about eSports both as spectators and as active participants. For the former, I cite a number of resources such as Twitch and theScore eSports, while in the latter I explain social platforms such as Discord and Highlander Gaming which conveniently allows me to talk about eSports at the collegiate level, which is extremely minimal in its scope. For my last class, I host a tournament for two video games: Sound Voltex, and Super Smash Brothers Ultimate. Whether students choose to participate in either of the tournaments is entirely up to them, but I wish to use this opportunity to give students a taste of what a small local area network tournament looks like.

Below I am attaching samples of my syllabus and some PowerPoint slides to provide a rough idea about what I cover in this class:

Date	Workshop Topics	Assignments
1	What is eSports?	Kahoot – What do you know about eSports?
2	eSports as a business: Part I	Work on tournament budget presentation in class
3	eSports as a business: Part II	Presentations
4	How People Get Involved in eSports / Future of eSports/	Writing Assessment: What have you learned in this class thus far and what do you wish to learn in future classes?
5	Complications of eSports / Differences in eSports culture worldwide	Kahoot – Miscellaneous Questions / Tournament Knowledge
6	PC Building / The Diverse eSports community	Kahoot – PC Building
7	The Diverse eSports community: Part I	Work on presentation about a specific video gaming/ eSports community
8	The Diverse eSports community: Part I	Presentations
9	Is eSports really considered <u>sports</u> ?/ The art of shout casting	Prepare for Week 10
10	Tournament	Course Evaluation and Reflection.

1 - Quiz

Where did eSports supposedly begin?



2 - Quiz

Well now you know... but what game was the tournament for, and when?



3 - Quiz

What is the most popular platform for video gamers for streaming



4 - Quiz

Which of the following is the world's largest gaming convention?



5 - Quiz

Where is the world's largest gaming convention held?



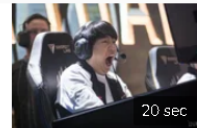
6 - Quiz

What is the correct capitalization of esports?



7 - Quiz

Which game was considered to be the first eSport? (The game that started modern eSports).



WHAT NEEDS TO BE INCLUDED IN THE PRESENTATION


TITLE WITH:
NAMES
TYPE OF COMMUNITY
GROUP NAME

PRESENTATIONS SHOULD
BE OVER 5 MINUTES.

AND →

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |
| Where/how
the community
got its start | Big games
(past and
present) | Demographics
(age, gender,
country etc.) | Big
names/person
alities |
|  |  |  |  |
| Memorable
moments
(events,
controversies,
etc.) | Major
tournaments &
competitions | What the
future looks
like | Personal
thoughts |

KIM "GEGURI" SE-YEON [0-40 STARTING RECORD]
FIRST AND ONLY FEMALE OUT OF ALL 20 TEAMS (UP TO 12 PLAYERS
PER TEAM)

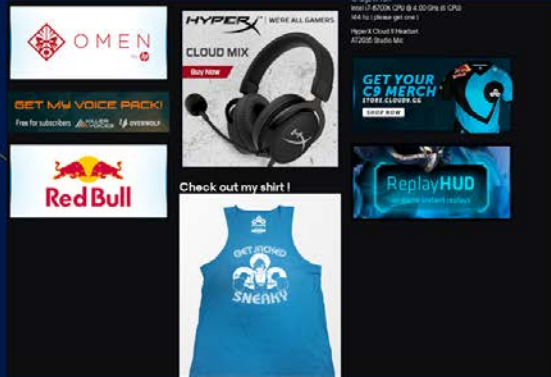


22

Sponsorships (twitch.tv/c9sneaky)

FR

OMEN, HyperX etc...



Gaming Chairs, Clothing Companies, BMW???



17

Another DLC Example

FR

K/DA was also an incredible marketing tool for Riot Games!

Standard: Akali (Free)



K/DA Akali: Prestige Edition (\$20)



9

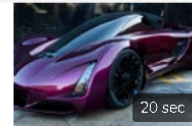
7 - Quiz

Who is the primary sponsor for this year's Highlander Convention 2019?



8 - Quiz

This component keeps memory of actively running programs



9 - Quiz

How much storage is in a typical SSD vs RAM



10 - Quiz

Below is an image of a ____



11 - Quiz

PC builders often end up deciding on CPUs from which two companies?



12 - True or False

Below are images are graphics cards (T or F)?



13 - Quiz

To turn on a PC, you will need which component?



Normal - BO1
 Finals - BO2

In the interest of time, matches are going to be very short.

Final Results

Supreme Champion: **Nowa**
 Worthy Adversary: **roochio**
 MaybeNext Time: **uwu**
 4thplace: **Berenice**

[Full Results](#)

Semifinals		Finals			
1	uwu	3	4	Nowa	✓
4	Nowa		2	roochio	
2	roochio	3	1	uwu	✓
3	Berenice		2	Berenice	

Bronze Match

1	uwu	✓
2	Berenice	



The teaching experience was noticeably different from my tutoring experiences. In the latter, students come to me with problems which I help guide them through active and engaged learning. While this structure is similar to the more interactive days in the class, the traditional

lecture style is very different, as students are passively taking in information without much emotional expression. This at times has led me to question whether or not students were interested, engaged, or actually learned anything, however the feedback I received through Kahoots, writing assessments, and the final iEval was very positive, which gave me confidence for teaching the class the following quarter. Secondly, the beginning of nearly every class started with some sort of technical difficulty with the Smart TV which would often delay the start of my class by a few minutes, while adding to the existing awkward tension that arises in a silent room with all eyes on me. The issues can mostly be mitigated by bringing my own laptop and using a provided HDMI to connect to the TV, but there are still delays with the TV attempting to recognize my device. If at times I can only use the Smart TV, then I can only hope that the PC is on, otherwise I am looking at a 5 minute boot up time, and even then the provided mouse and keyboard may not work due to them not being charged or batteries being dead.

The first lesson was quite enjoyable, though I almost ran out of time to finish my Kahoot. With another R'course using the Teaching and Learning Center, and students having other classes to attend, I learned to be more mindful of the time needed to complete a lesson. I noticed an interesting shift in class attendance after the next two lectures, with some students opting to not attend class every other week, while others don't ever show up, even if they do express interest in the course material. This, on top of the classroom layout, that has the seats relatively far from the Smart TV made it really awkward, as there were obviously less people than when class first started, and the seats people take are primarily amongst the back rows. In regard to presentations, the students found exponentially more benefit from the final assignment about video game communities, because it gave everyone an opportunity to research a community more in depth, while learning from all the other research from their peers.

Students did enjoy the Kahoots, especially the one about PC building, which could have been a number of factors, including the unique subject material, to the level of comfort students have with each other, and the fact that I had made that specific activity an individual one to foster some competition. I even took some content from the presentations students made about video game communities and put it in a new Kahoot to make sure students were paying to each other. Lastly, in regard to competition, I had a great time running the video game tournament. Though the equipment was a struggle to bring, and the turnout was relatively low, students definitely had fun watching and playing the games while learning something about small scale tournaments and how they could look. I meant to give prizes to students, but I ran out of time, which although I had learned my lesson about time management from week 1, this was to be expected given the nature of the lesson. This, coupled with the fact that the next R'course had each individual student give a presentation that day meant that we needed to be out before 2:00 PM to respect their time.

I also had the opportunity to reteach this course in the winter. As of writing this capstone reflection, I am teaching the course to a brand new group of students, utilizing the lessons I learned from last time to ensure a much smoother experience for the class. While I am having an easier time managing the class, I still ran into a few road bumps. As mentioned previously, the Smart TV is not the most reliable display, so during the very first day of class, I warned students that it may take several minutes in the beginning of each class to set up. I am glad I gave this heads up, because not too long after I had an issue where the TV was not recognizing my laptop as a display, so my primary display became my 15.6" screen. Consequently, I needed everyone to move up as close as possible to the podium so they could see the presentation. The biggest issue I have run into this quarter is the Monday holidays. Since my class runs from 2:00 to 3:00

PM on Monday, two of my ten classes will not be held due to Martin Luther King Jr. Day and President's Day. This has required me to condense my lessons quite significantly, however I am confident that I will have gone through the entirety of course material despite these setbacks.

This quarter's class appears to have a bit more background knowledge about eSports than my prior class. My only worry is that they may not learn anything new in the class that they have already experienced in their time playing video games, however I remind myself that while creating the lesson plans for this class, I learned quite a bit, and I am confident that other students will too. One example of this is my experience in the rhythm gaming community, with popular titles such as Guitar Hero or Dance Dance Revolution. Only the former was mainstream at one point and even so it was overshadowed by the bigger online titles such as Halo, League of Legends, and so much more. Because of this discrepancy in exposure, I can share my experiences being active in this niche community, which I believe has given students a more detailed outlook about eSports across all genres as opposed to what they may have seen on Youtube or have heard from friends. Attendance also seems to be higher on average, though I think this is merely a coincidence given the small sample size I am working with rather than it being indicative of any changes I made in the course. I hope that the remainder of the class runs smoothly as I intend it to so students can have the best possible learning experience.

Looking back, I wish I had started on this R'course sooner. I had this idea since the second year, but it wasn't until my honors classes when I realized I had to actually put my thoughts into action. I have learned so much about lesson plans, teaching a class, and finding new ways to interact with students which I could have benefitted from in the years prior to teaching this class. The R'course program allowed me to express my passion for eSports through education, which is quite the opposite from what I expected, because I have always been told

growing up that video games don't have a place in education. I do believe that as eSports grows and moves into the mainstream, people will start to become more curious and will also wish to learn about the industry the same way I did many years ago. That way, everyone can be part of the evolving conversation about video games and their place in society, while also finding their own ways for getting involved in the world of eSports. I am proud to say that I took a leadership role in opening the minds of students to new frontiers in the world of media and culture, and I hope to continue being involved in video game communities in the future.

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